DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 340 433 JC 920 041

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TITLE A Study of the Relationship between Attendance and Grades of Three Business Law Classes at Broome Community College.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 26p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Attendance; *Attendance Patterns; Community Colleges; Educational Policy; *Grade Prediction; *Grades (Scholastic); Learning Theories; Participation; Predictive Measurement; Predictor Variables; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS *Broome Community College NY

ABSTRACT

In an effort to encourage the growth and maturity of its students, Broome Community College in New York abolished its attendance policy. For the past 7 years, both attendance rates and grade point averages (GPA's) of students at the college had been dropping. In 1990, a study was conducted at BCC to determine if there was a measurable relationship between attendance patterns and final grades in courses. Participants in the study were 78 students enrolled in three sections of Business Law II during the spring term of 1990. Attendance was recorded for each class, and students' attendance was classified as either excellent (less than 3 classes missed out of 29), good (3 to 6 missed classes), or poor (more than 6 missed classes). During the semester, students were tested four times, with each test accounting for 25% of the final grade. Grades of A, B, C, D, and F were awarded to students, with A representing the highest grade. Findings and conclusions of the study were as follows: (1) a total of 18 students had excellent attendance, 32 had good attendance, and 28 had poor attendance; (2) of the students with excellent or good attendance, all received final course grades of at least A, B, or C, and there were no students in these groups receiving grades of D or F; (3) of the 28 students with poor class attendance, 17 received grades of A, B, C, while 11 received grades of D or F; (4) a chi square analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between poor attendance and low grades; and (5) based on study results, it was recommended that the college implement an attendance policy. A literature review and references are included. (JMC)

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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTENDANCE AND GRADES OF THREE BUSINESS LAW CLASSES AT BROOME COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Applied Education and Research

by

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Broome Community College

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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Nova University

November, 1990

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ABSTRACT

There had been a growing intensity of discussions at Broome Community College centering around attendance, grades, and increasing student learning experiences since the mandate from the Office of the Provost of State University of New York for a campus plan of assessment. The underlying problem at BCC is in order to encourage growth and maturity of the student, the college elected to abolish its attendance policy.

The purpose of this study was to focus on the differences between attendance patterns and final grades, and to determine if there was a relationship between the two variables. The significance to BCC was the data might provide the catalyst to encourage the campus to discuss the merits of establishing attendance regulations.

The participants in the study were 78 students enrolled in three sections of Business Law II at BCC, spring, 1990. There was a total of twenty-nine class meetings during the semester. Attendance was recorded for each class. Attendance patterns were defined as excellent (less than three missed classes), good (three to six missed classes), and poor (more than six missed classes). The participants were tested four times, each worth 25 percent of the final grade. The grades were calculated based on the scale of A (91-100), B (81-90), C (71-80), D (65-70) and F (departmental policy of 65).

A chi square test was used to determine if final grades were related to attendance. The null hypothesis was there was no significant relationship between attendance patterns and final grades. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance.

The results of the test supported the research hypothesis that there was a significant difference in grades between those students with good attendance and the students with poor attendance. The study rejected the null hypothesis. The conclusion of the study was there was an extremely significant difference (value required at .05 percent level was .103; the study resulted in a chi square value of 22.904). The recommendation was the college institute an attendance policy for the students attending classes at Broome.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
Chapter	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Significance	1
Research Question	3
Hypotheses	3
2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	4
3. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES	9
Definitions of Terms	10
Assumptions	11
Limitations	11
4. RESULTS	13
5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
Discussion	16
Conclusions	17
Implications	17
Recommendations for the Improvement of Practice	18
REFERENCES	19
APPENDICES	

LIST OF TABLES

Table — Page

1. Breakdown of Students in the Three Business Law II Classes Showing the Breakdown of the Classes BCC Business Department, Spring 1990. 10

2. Comparison of Attendance within Three Business Law II Classes at BCC by Class in Business Department with 29 Possible Classes, Spring, 1990 11

3. Comparison of Grades within Three Business Law II Classes at BCC by Gender, Full-time, Part-time, Business Department, Spring, 1990 12

4. Contingency Table Showing Relationships Between Attendance and Grades of 78 Students, Department of Business Broome Community College, Spring, 1990. . . . 15

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

For some time the faculty at Broome Community College have been concerned with variables which appear to impact the learning experiences of BCC students. One extremely popular variable in the discussions is attendance and its relationship with the grades obtained by the students. Due to BCC's concern for, and commitment to, the retention of students and a mandate from the Office of Provost of the State University of New York for a campus plan of assessment, the intensity of the discussions centering around attendance, grades, and student learning experiences is increasing. The college catalog states, "colleges throughout the nation have found that students who regularly attend class have a better success record than students who do not regularly attend classes." (BCC College Catalog, 1990-91)

In early 1969, an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal defined education "as Maturity! Not just physical or intellectual, but also emotional and spiritual." It went on to say that "without maturity.... there can be no growth, no understanding, and especially no understanding of the great questions of one's time." Ernest Boyer (1987) states a quality college is concerned about outcomes. An effective college designs procedures to extend and encourage a student's growth.

As a result of this concept of "maturity" and designing procedures to encourage growth, the college elected to take a position of abolishing its attendance policy. The college catalog (BCC College Catalog, 1990-91) states, "Class attendance is a measurable commitment by the student toward meeting individual responsibility for his/her own education." The underlying problem at BCC is the college has no attendance regulations.

It is the role of an instructor to provide the student an educational challenge, providing an exciting, substantive learning environment, and allowing personal growth. However, at BCC over the past seven years attendance has been dropping as well as the overall grade point average (G.P.A.) of students.

The purpose of the study was to analyze the differences between attendance patterns and final grades and to determine if there was a relationship between the two variables. The literature reviewed during the study was in two areas: (a) improving student learning in the classroom, and (b) the variables that have effect on the student growth and outcome. The data obtained was from students attending three freshman year Business Law II courses at Broome Community College. The significance to BCC was the data might provide the catalyst to encourage faculty and administration to discuss the merits of establishing attendance regulations.

The research hypothesis was there will be a significant difference in grades between those students with good

attendance and the students with poor attendance. Good grades weredefined as "A, B, or C" and poor grades were defined as "D or F". The independent variable was the attendance patterns. The dependent variable was the final grade.

The practicum applied to the Applied Education and Research seminar in that the course stressed quasi-experimental research as a problem-solving method.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature reviewed during this study covered two distinct areas: (1) improving student learning in the classroom, and (2) the variables that have effect on student growth and outcome. There is agreement that teaching is a complex activity (Noel, 1985; McKeachie, 1986; Roe, 1986; Boyer, 1987; Guskey, 1988; and Schlossberg, 1989). Never has the complex activity of guiding student "maturity" seemed so central to society as it is today. The complex activity requires faculty to make commitments to teaching, learning about their students, and acknowledging the range of student skills and motivational levels. Faculty are encouraged to prepare students for satisfying, effective, and contributing roles in the society they will inherit (Bok, 1986). Students and faculty alike are to be reminded of both the opportunities available to them and the obligations that guide a college education. Faculty need to shift from grading to evaluating, from classifying and certifying to challenging and monitoring, and from lecturing to teaching the student (Eble, 1989).

Never has college and its faculty had the opportunities that modern technology now presents to reach the students at school or new audiences at work, or home (Bok, 1986). Students are not always on target all the time, so faculty must emphasize the importance of learning and the role of

technology, and the faculty must relate the material to the students' world. (Milton, 1986). Institutions must make knowledge attractive, not only to young people but also to students (adults) of all ages, positions, and backgrounds. Institutions must review the overall structure and effectiveness of their curriculum, question the efficiency of resources involved, and assess outcomes such as values and attitudes (Roe, 1986).

Dr. Patricia Cross, in her keynote address to the New York State Association of 2-Year Colleges, stated the climate for student learning is created by teaching faculty and that successful teaching brings energy to the community (April, 1990). Students will do the least they can get away with in the classroom (McKeachie, 1988). Faculty have to enrich the academic setting, facilitating interaction between faculty and student, and enhancing the learning environment (McMillan, 1988). Dr. Cross stated that teaching can go on without learning, and good learners monitor their own learning (April, 1990). Faculty must monitor and help those students who are not self-motivated. The institution needs to be concerned with identifying the skills a course/curriculum intends to develop. Also, the institution needs to be able to determine how effectively (attitudes, values, and skills) and efficiently (funds, equipment, staff time) the students have been taught (Roe, 1986). Faculty are encouraged to challenge the student, applying the classroom learning through written assignments and problem solving.

Trudi Banta, Research Professor and Director of Research at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, during her presentation at a SUNY Conference on Assessment, suggested this renewed interest for improving the learning environment stimulates curriculum reform, suggests content for faculty development, and provides direction for improved programs and services (February, 1990). Comparing the patterns of teaching before and after the Civil War, researchers find little, if any, change in teaching practices (Boyer, 1987). Learning becomes an active exercise in which the students participate and the faculty provide direction. The student must be given the opportunity to question, challenge and be challenged, explore, and introduce and critique new assumptions.

While Boyer (1987) believes faculty are solely responsible for determining what has been learned, many believe there are other variables that enter the arena (Parnell, 1985; Milton, 1986; Halpern, 1987; McMillan, 1988; and Schlossberg, 1989). McKeachie (1986) feels grades are a method of communication and students will do and learn only what is necessary to obtain the grade they desire. Faculty realize grades and grading strongly affect the academic climate within which the teaching and learning interplay (McMillan, 1988). What many faculty may not realize is that grades and grading enrich the academic setting, facilitating interaction between faculty and students, and are arguments for college learning (Noel, 1985; Boyer, 1987; Guskey, 1988). Grades always enter

into the discussion as a renewed interest on what variables appear to have the most impact on the learning experience (Noel, 1985). Grading criteria reflects specific learning standards, and must relate to and emphasize student learning (Guskey, 1988). While grades keep some students from learning what they want to learn and bear little or no relationship to any measure of later achievement (Eble, 1989), grades should be considered earned by instructor and student alike.

The quality, nature, number, and value a faculty member places on grades/tests produces a powerful force in shaping what and how the students learn (McMillan, 1988). The classroom is a composite of various student activities and diverse participation, all affected by the student's level of desire and motivation to learn. Dr. Cross suggests the climate of the classroom, set by the institution and faculty member, determines the growth and learning that takes place (April, 1990). The importance a student places on being in class and the amount of time college students spend in class are both extremely important in determining the learning they obtain (Guskey, 1988). Boyer (1987) supports the position that learning is an active exercise in which the student must participate. Students, and human beings in general, behave in ways to either promote success or failure . Students will do and learn what is necessary to get the grade they desire. Students with anxiety for tests, grades, or the material being taught tend to avoid the situation that causes the anxiety (McKeachie, 1988). Students who do not attend class, fail to

participate while in class, and do not study for exams, lack faith in their ability to learn and withdraw themselves from the learning process (Noel, 1985). Students' attitudes toward attendance, grades and learning swing, depending on society's concern for standards, accountability, ranking, and individual growth (McMillan, 1988).

The amount of time a student spends in class is important in determining the learning success of the student (Guskey, 1988). Class should require attendance with assignments, class activities, and deliberate built-in successful experiences for the students (Noel, 1985). Attendance is one variable that influences learning (Noel, 1985; Roe, 1986; Boyer, 1987; Guskey, 1988: Eble, 1989; and Cross, 1990). In order to get the most out of class a student must attend and become involved (Guskey, 1988).

This study was based on the premise that faculty and administration need to increase the learning experience that goes on in the classroom. Literature supported this view. The study took one of the stated variables affecting the learning environment--attendance--and focused on the differences in attendance patterns and learning. The study tied into the Applied Educational Research and Evaluation seminar since it used inferential statistics.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was one of a quasi-experimental research. In order to determine if there was a relationship in the study, a chi square test was used.

Procedures

Population

The participants in this study were the students enrolled in three sections of Business Law II at Broome Community College, spring, 1990. The enrolled participants numbered 80 students; however, two never showed (no shows) so the number of students in the study was 78. The breakdown of the group (Table 1) showed 44 females and 34 males. The group was comprised of 69 full-time and 9 part-time students.

Collection of Data

The three classes met on Tuesday and Thursday for fifteen weeks. One class meeting was cancelled, so the total number of class meetings was twenty-nine. The classes met at 8:00 a.m. until 9:15 a.m., 12:30 p.m. until 1:45 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. until 3:15 p.m. Attendance (Table 2) was recorded for each class during the entire semester. Attendance patterns were defined as excellent (less than three missed classes out of twenty-nine), good (three to six missed classes), and poor

Table 1
Breakdown of Students in the Three Business Law II Classes Showing the Breakdown of the Classes BCC Business Department, Spring, 1990

Data	8:00 a.m. Class	12:00 noon Class	2:00 p.m. Class
Numbers	29 students	29 students	20 students
Females	16	17	11
Males	13	12	9
Full Time	27	24	18
Part Time	2	5	2

(more than six missed classes). During the semester the students were tested four times with each test accounting for 25 percent of their final grade. Final grades (Table 3) were calculated based on the scale of A (91-100), B (81-90), C (71-80), D (65-70) and F (below 65). The grade of F (below 65) is a departmental policy. The other grades were at the discretion of the instructor.

A chi square test was used to determine if final grades are related to attendance. The null hypothesis was there was no significant relationship between the attendance patterns and final grades. The alternate hypothesis was there is a significant relationship between the attendance patterns and final grades. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. There was a conventional level for rejecting a null hypothesis of this sample size.

Table 2
Comparison of Attendance within the Three Business Law II Classes at BCC by Class in Business Department With 29 Possible Classes, Spring, 1990

DATA	8:00 a.m. Class	12:00 noon Class	2:00 p.m. Class
Students	29	29	20
Excellent (less than 3 missed)*	6	8	4
Good (three to six missed)**	13	10	9
Poor (more than 6 missed classes)***	10	11	7

* Excellent is attending 27 or more of the possible 29 classes
** Good is attending 23 to 26 of the possible 29 classes
*** Poor is attending less than 23 of the 29 classes

A number of assumptions were made concerning this study. One assumption was the three sections of Business Law II were representative of the campus community. Another assumption was that all other variables, including academic ability levels, that might influence the results remained constant. A third assumption was that the administration and faculty at the college wish to determine ways of defending and promoting the learning experiences that go on in the classroom. A limitation to the study was the results were limited to three Business Law II sections, Business Department, Broome Community College.

Table 3
Comparison of Grades Within the Three Business Law II Classes At BCC by Gender, Full-time, Part-time Business Department, Spring, 1990

DATA	8:00 a.m. Class	12:00 noon Class	2:00 p.m. Class
Grades of (A, B, or C)	24	24	19*
Male	10	9	9
Female	14	15	10
Full time	22	19	17
Part time	2	5	2
Grades of (D, or F)	5	5	1*
Male	3	3	0
Female	2	2	1
Full time	5	5	1
Part time	0	0	0

* Two students were "no shows," making total of 22

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This study is based on the promise that faculty and administration need to increase the learning experience that goes on in the classroom. Literature was reviewed to determine if these groups could improve classroom learning and which, if any, variables might have an effect on the student growth and outcome. The student must be given the opportunity to question, challenge and be challenged, explore, and introduce and critique new assumptions.

The literature reviewed also supported the position that many variables are responsible for learning. The classroom is a composite of various student activities and diverse participation, all affected by the student's level of desire and motivation to learn. Much of the literature supported the amount of time a student spends in class (attendance) is important in determining the learning success of the student. Noel, Roe, Boyer, Guskey, Eble, and Cross all support that attendance is one variable that influences learning, and in order to get the most out of class a student must attend and become involved.

This study took one of the stated variables affecting the learning environment--attendance--and focused on the differences in attendance patterns and learning. The procedure was to maintain attendance (Table 2, page 11) for each of three Business Law II classes during the semester. The attendance patterns were defined as excellent (less than three missed classes out of

twenty-nine good (three to six missed classes), and poor (more that six missed classes). During the semester the students were tested four times with each test accounting for 25 percent of their final grade. Final grades (Table 3, page 12) were calculated based on a scale of A (91-100), B (81-90), C (71-80), D (65-70) and F (Below 65). The grade of F (below 65) is departmental policy, the other grades were at the discretion of the instructor.

Tables B page 2

A chi square test was used to determine if final grades are related to attendance. The null hypothesis was there was no significant relationship between the attendance patterns and final grades. The hypothesis was tested at the .05 level of significance. This is a conventional level for rejecting a null hypothesis of this sample size. The contingency table (Table 4) showed the data. In the three by two matrix, given marginal totals, if two frequencies are known the remaining four frequencies are fixed and can exhibit no freedom of variation. The chi square for the data in Table 4 is 22.904. The number of degrees of freedom associated with this table is 2. The value of chi square required for significance at the 5 percent level is .103. This supports the research hypothesis that there was a significant difference in grades between those students with good attendance and the students with poor attendance. This study rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the attendance patterns and final grades.

Table 4
Contingency Table Showing Relationship Between Attendance And Grades of 78 Subjects, Department of Business Broome Community College, Spring 1990

DATA	A,B,C	D, F	Total
Excellent (less than 3 missed)*	18 (15.46)	0 (2.53)	18
Good (three to six missed)**	32 (27.48)	0 (4.51)	32
Poor (more than 6 missed classes)***	17 (24.051)	11 (3.94)	28
Total	67	11	78

* Excellent is attending 27 or more of the possible 29 classes
** Good is attending 23 to 26 of the possible 29 classes
*** Poor is attending less than 23 of the 29 classes

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The study, based on the premise that faculty need to increase the learning experience that goes on in the classroom, showed a relationship between attendance and final grades. The study did not conclude any correlation between attendance and final grades. Whether good attendance causes high grades, or whether students who usually get high grades have good attendance can not be determined from this study. Literature supported the position that many variables account for the learning that goes on in the classroom. From the literature (Noel, 1985; Bok, McKeachie, Milton, and Roe, 1986; Boyer, and Halpern, 1987; Guskey, 1988; Eble, McMillan, and Schlossberg, 1989; Banta, and Cross, 1990;) the study found that learning becomes an active exercise in which the students participate and the faculty and administration provide direction. Dr. Cross stated that teaching <u>can</u> and <u>does</u> go on without learning, and good learners monitor their own learning (April, 1990). While Boyer (1987) stated that faculty are solely responsible for determining what was learned, literature supports there are many variables that influence and effect the learning process.

Noel (1985), McKeachie (1986), McMillan (1988), specifically support the position that grades affect the environment within which the teaching and learning interplay. Dr. Cross suggests the

climate of the classroom determines the growth and learning that takes place. Guskey (1988) stated the amount of time a student spends in class is important in determining the learning success of the student. This study supports the literature, and in particular, the position taken by Guskey. Students with better attendance show better grades. The students with poor grades illustrated poor attendance. There was a relationship.

Conclusions

A conclusion from this study, and supported by literature, is that there is a relationship between attendance and grades. The study shows an extremely significant difference in grades between those students with good attendance (and their grades) and the students with poor attendance (and their grades).

Implications

Increased attendance in classes can expose the student to more of the learning experience provided by the faculty member and class participation. The implication is that attendance can make a difference in the grade. Since only students with poor attendance (more than 6 missed classes) received poor grades (D, or F), it could be implied one way of improving a student's grade would be to increase their attendance. Administration and faculty can improve the learning process by encouraging students to attend classes. The study showed that attendance is an important variable in determining grades.

Recommendations

There is one recommendation to be made from this study. The recommendation is that the college consider instituting an attendance policy to encourage students to attend classes. The purpose of this study was to focus on the differences between attendance patterns and final grades. The study found an significant difference in grades between those students with good attendance and the students with poor attendance. This recommendation will be made to the dean of business and office technologies and the vice president of academic affairs.

The data from this study will be presented as justification for the recommendation. Since the study showed such a significant relationship between attendance and grades, and literature supports this position, and since the campus is concerned about improving student learning, this recommendation based on the study could be the prod needed to activate a campus-wide committee to address attendance.

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